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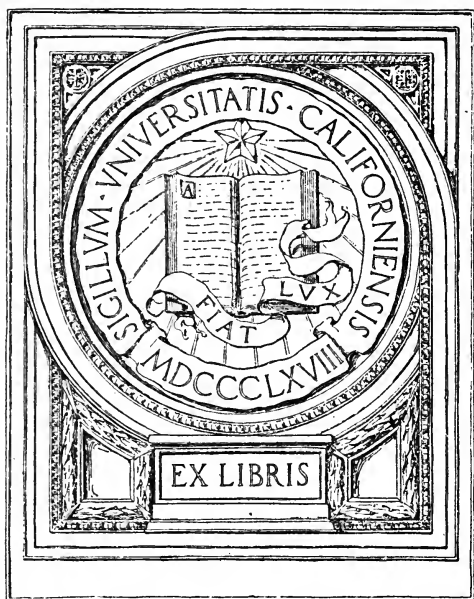
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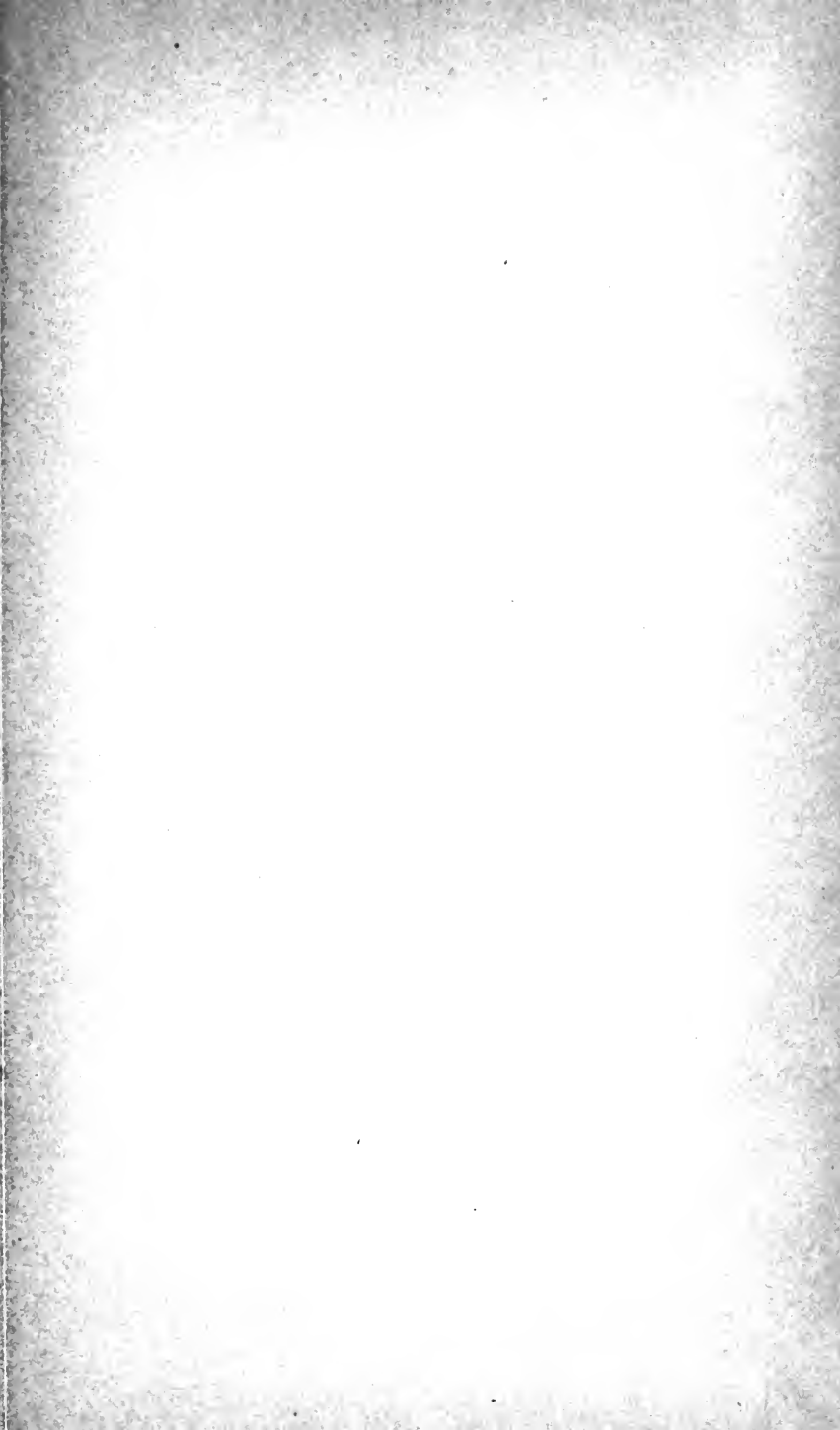
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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

OUTLINES OF

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE,

OUTLINES OF

Brian

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

BY

J. G. LEWIS

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight."

*"To some perhaps my name is odious,
But such as love me guard me from their tongues."*

London

W. W. GIBBINGS, 18, Bury Street, W.C.

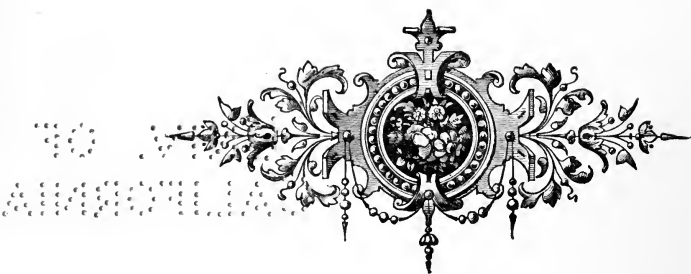
Canterbury W. E. GOULDEN.

1891.

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TO
HENRY IRVING,
WHO, BY HIS HISTRIONIC GENIUS,
HAS KINDLED FRESH ENTHUSIASM
FOR THE SHAKESPEREAN DRAMA,
THIS SHORT SKETCH OF SHAKESPEARE'S
GREAT PREDECESSOR

Is gratefully inscribed.

*"Alcun non può saper da chi sia amato
Quando felice in su la ruota sede."*



PREFATORY NOTE.

The greater part of the following pages was written with the view of stimulating the inhabitants of Marlowe's birthplace to take an interest in the poet's writings, and to do themselves the honour of helping on the Memorial which was then under discussion. The writer was amazed at the ignorance, apathy, or positive hostility displayed with reference to Marlowe. Some had never even heard of his name; others had a vague remembrance that he was a dramatist; whilst others again preferred to believe the unproved assertions of the poet's enemies, rather than to accept gratefully the glorious gift of the poet's works.

Fortunately Marlowe's admirers, scarce though they may be in his native city, are plentiful enough elsewhere, and are not likely to diminish, so that his name and fame are for ever secure.

In sending this little book forth among a wider public the only hope of the writer is that it may cause others to go to the writings of the great originator of the English drama, and study them for themselves. A rich reward is in store for such students.





CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE :

OUTLINES OF

HIS LIFE AND WORKS.



IN the register of St. George's Church, Canterbury, occurs this entry: "1563, The 26th day of February was christened Christopher the sonne of John Marlowe." Two months later (old style) the parish register of Stratford-on-Avon records the christening of William Shakespeare, so that the two men who have left the deepest impress on our national drama—the first as the pioneer of new paths, the second as the triumphant explorer of the new regions—entered the world at about the same time. But they were not destined to quit it so close together, for whilst 30 years was the limit of Marlowe's tempestuous and highly-charged career, Shakespeare's life ran on to 52.

The question whether Marlowe could ever have rivalled Shakespeare as a dramatist will be glanced at later on, but, judging by the apparent ease with which he attained mastery over his art, and by the great superiority of his later work compared with *Tamburlaine*, it is surely not extravagant to suppose that after an additional 10 or 15 years' acquaintance with the joys and sorrows of human life he would have left us some masterpieces worthy of being ranged by the side of those of the Avon bard? At any rate, it must be granted that no poet in his early work ever gave richer promise than Marlowe, and although criticism is only bound to estimate the actual achievement, still the age at which a work was written cannot wholly be left out of consideration for purposes of comparison or contrast.

Marlowe came of a family which had been established in Canterbury for several hundred years. His forefathers appear to have been traders; some of whom amassed sufficient wealth to be able to further public objects. Christopher's father was a shoemaker and a freeman of the city. He must have been held in some consideration, if, as Mr. Ingram supposes, the Catherine Arthur whom he married in 1561, was the daughter of Christopher Arthur, Rector of St. Peter's, and a gentleman entitled to bear arms. This question of the status of the poet's mother is a most interesting one, and seems to corroborate the commonly received opinion that most great writers have been fortunate in possessing intelligent, refined mothers. The whole of Marlowe's early youth was probably spent at Canterbury, which at that time appears to have been merrier than it is now; for feasting and public games were the order of the day, and plays and pageants were frequently given. Perhaps the latter class of entertainment may have awakened and fostered in little Kit Marlowe that dramatic element which was afterwards to be so overpoweringly manifested. There are no wonderful stories related of Marlowe's precocity, in fact it may as well be stated at once that the materials for constructing his biography are scanty and incomplete, though not more so than is usual in the case of our early dramatic poets. It is certain that he was admitted on the foundation of the King's School, Canterbury, at Michaelmas, 1578, where he must have made acquaintances among the best-born youth of the county, but where, judging from other institutions of the kind at that period, it is unlikely that his studies were either deep or extensive. It is pleasant to picture little Christopher as a gallant, high-spirited youth, joining in the games of skill and daring which were then current, or wandering about the tranquil walks of the Cathedral Precincts, and indulging, perhaps, in roseate dreams of the future. Surely, in after years, amid the storm and stress of his London life, he must sometimes have looked back regretfully upon the calm days passed at the King's School?

The next important date in Marlowe's life is 1581, for he then, being in his 18th year, matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where, if it resembled St. John's College at that time, life was anything but a bed of roses. The following contemporary description of student-life at the latter College is quoted by Mr. Ingram in a recent number of the "Universal Review." "There be divers there which rise daily about 4 or 5 of the clock in the morning, and from 5 till 6 of the clock use common prayer, with an exhortation of God's Word, in a common chapel; and from 6 until 10 of the clock use ever either private study or common lectures. At 10 of the clock they go to dinner, when as they be content with a penny piece of beef among four, having a pottage made of the broth of the same beef, with salt and oatmeal, and nothing else. After this slender diet they be either teaching or learning until 5 of the clock in the evening; when as they have a supper not much better than their dinner. Immediately after which they go either to reasoning in problems or to some other study, until it be 9 or 10

of the clock ; and then, being without fires, are fain to walk or run up and down half-an-hour to get a heat on their feet when they go to bed."

How would the gilded youth of *our* days face such an example of "plain living and high thinking?" However, Marlowe's College was not quite so poorly provided with creature comforts as this—thanks mainly to the liberality of Archbishop Parker, who was one of those who think that if you take care of the stomach the brains will take care of themselves.

At Cambridge the future Dramatist found himself among young men of wit and promise, with whom he was doubtless well able to hold his own, for assuredly neither University at that time sheltered a greater genius than the Canterbury shoemaker's son. It is a significant fact, viewed in connection with the allegations which were afterwards made against Marlowe, that one of his fellow collegians was the unfortunate Frances Kett, who published certain unorthodox views about the Trinity, for which in 1589, he was burnt to death at Norwich. It is not the purpose of this Lecture to inquire into Marlowe's religious opinions, but as statements concerning them unsupported by credible evidence have acquired authority by the mere force of re-iteration, a few words must be devoted to this subject. The blackest indictment against Marlowe's character is that written by a man named Bame, who was probably bribed by the Puritans, and whose veracity is further impugned by the damaging fact that he was afterwards hanged at Tyburn. That Marlowe was sceptical in theological matters, and that he had the courage of his opinions and expressed them freely, cannot reasonably be doubted ; it must also be granted that his ardent temperament led him into excesses which were then, alas ! too commonly committed by men of his profession ; but that he was the vulgar atheistical monster depicted by Bame, Beard, and others, is *most emphatically not proven*. The truth is, the Puritans, who hated all dramatists, had a double grudge against Marlowe ; first, because by reason of his commanding genius he was more successful in filling the theatres than they were in filling the places of worship ; and secondly, because of his fearless criticism of priests and dogmas. Happily, *we* live in a more tolerant age, when a man cannot be openly persecuted for holding opinions different from those held by the persecutors. We no longer think that the best way to convert a man is to *burn* him. *Now*, as the Laureate sings :—

" A man may speak the thing he will."

After all, what have we to do with Marlowe's religion ? Do we enjoy Homer or Horace the less because they were pagans ? It is Marlowe the *dramatic poet* who extorts our admiration and holds us by the potent magic of his genius, and his theories of religion (which are not forced upon us in his writings) do not at all affect the splendour of his poetry.

We now resume the main thread of his career. Without being a model student, Marlowe must have done some good work

at Cambridge, for in 1583 he took his B.A. degree, proceeding M.A. in 1587. What he did in the interval between these two dates has not been satisfactorily ascertained. Some say, with a certain degree of probability, that he became a soldier; others think that he turned sailor; possibly he remained at Cambridge, gaining his livelihood by tuition. However this may have been, he was in London in 1587, for in that year his first tragedy was produced. Like Shakespeare, Peele, and Ben Jonson, he became an actor; and doubtless the stage experience thus gained was afterwards of great assistance to him. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, went to London about the same time as Marlowe; but he commenced life there under very different circumstances, for whilst he was, to all appearance, an inexperienced rustic youth, Marlowe was a practised wit, a graduate of the University, and a complete man of the world. The year 1587, the date of Marlowe's first tragedy, *Tamburlaine*, is the turning point in the poet's career. But it is something more than this—it marks a new era in English literature. In order to make this apparent we must take a swift glance at the condition of the English drama when Marlowe began to write. English comedy begins with *Ralph Roister Doister*, written about 1550; and English tragedy with Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, represented in 1562. Then followed a series of heavy dramas either translated from the Greek or Italian, or founded on classical stories; but as yet there was no *national* drama—nothing which reflected the life of the nation, or embodied its aspirations. After this came the more original work of Lyly, Peele, Greene, and others, in whose plays there is an evident attempt to reproduce the feelings of real men and women. The form of these plays shows that no master-poet had yet arisen to assert the superiority of one mode of expression over the others; for some of the plays were written in prose, others in rhyme, and others again in a curious mixture of prose, rhyme, and blank verse. Marlowe, with the unerring instinct of genius, felt the capacity of blank verse to express all the passions of the human soul, employed it in his *Tamburlaine*, and thus consecrated it to the use of the English poetic drama for ever. But he did more than merely *adopt* blank verse—he transformed it. He found it a stiff, clumsy, monotonous mode of expression: he gave it pliancy, strength, and beauty, and made it the supreme instrument of tragic poetry. To show the difference between Marlowe's blank verse and blank verse anterior to him, two examples will now be given, the first taken from *Gorboduc*, and the second from *Tamburlaine*. This is Marcella's complaint from *Gorboduc*:

“ O queen of adamant, O marble breast,
 If not the favour of his comely face,
 If not his princely cheer and countenance,
 His valiant active arms, his manly breast,
 If not his fair and seemly personage;
 His noble limbs in such proportion cast
 As would have rapt a silly woman's thought,

If this might not have moved the bloody heart,
 And that most cruel hand the wretched weapon
 Even to let fall, and kissed him in the face,
 With tears, for ruth to reave such one by death,
 Should nature yet consent to slay her son ? ”

Compare this with the following speech by Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, and the dullest ear will be able to mark the advance in rhythmical music :

“ The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown,
 That caus'd the eldest son of heavenly Ops
 To thrust his doting father from his chair,
 And place himself in th' empyreal heaven,
 Mov'd me to manage arms against thy state.
 What better precedent than mighty Jove ?
 Nature, that fram'd us of four elements
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds :
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
 The wondrous architecture of the world,
 And measure every wandering planet's course,
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
 And always moving as the restless spheres,
 Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.”

What blank verse afterwards became in the hands of Shakespeare and Milton—how it expanded in the one so as to express the whole gamut of human emotions, and how it swelled in the other to organ-like tones of massive grandeur—you all know ; but it ought never to be forgotten that the man who paved the way for these supreme artists in verse was the Canterbury tradesman's son—Christopher Marlowe. But he did more than this. He not only determined the vehicle of dramatic expression, but he clothed the dry bones of the English drama with flesh, and poured into it the life-blood of passion, so that the production of *Tamburlaine* in 1587 is doubly memorable. It was the true beginning of that unparalleled outburst of human genius which we call the Elizabethan drama, and which included such stars as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Massinger, Chapman, Ford, Dekker, Heywood, Middleton, and Tourneur. Such a blaze of poetic glory, the world had never seen before, has not seen since, and will probably never see again. Truly may we say in the words of Dryden—

“ Theirs was the giant race before the flood,”

and Canterbury ought be proud indeed to know that this glorious race begins with her own wild son, Christopher Marlowe. To

return to *Tamburlaine*. Of course it is not contended that this play is made up of beauties only ; on the contrary, its faults are glaring—sometimes even outrageous, but they are the faults of a lusty overflowing genius, and were the natural outcome of that stirring period of boundless confidence and youthful strength. The word *exaggeration* perhaps best sums up these defects : too much bombast, too much fiery passion, too much blood, too much of everything except restraint—this is what strikes one in Marlowe's work as well as in the earliest plays of Shakespeare himself. But we must bear in mind that the audiences were very different then from what they are now. In those days the theatre-goers did not languidly whiff at cigarettes, nor chew quill toothpicks, nor play with an eye-glass, nor sip soda and brandy ; nor do they appear to have suffered from weak digestions which are answerable for so much in these degenerate days. On the contrary, they were accustomed to rough sports, and plenty of beef and beer ; and they had an abundance of good red blood dancing through their veins. The poet knew his audience. He wrote his words for men of daring, men of action, men well-nigh as ardent as himself, and the result was that the fiery energy of his play rendered it a triumphant success. Let us now examine a few passages from Marlowe's epoch-making work.

Is there in the whole domain of poetry a more glorious description of beauty and virtue than those glowing words of *Tamburlaine* which seem to burn into the reader's brain ?—

Ah, fair Zenocrate !—divine Zenocrate !—
 Fair is too foul an epithet for thee,
 That in thy passion for thy country's love,
 And fear to see thy kingly father's harm,
 With hair dishevelled wip'st thy watery cheeks ;
 And, like to Flora in her morning pride,
 Shaking her silver tresses in the air,
 Rain'st on the earth resolvèd pearl in showers,
 And sprinklest sapphires on thy shining face,
 Where Beauty, mother to the Muses, sits
 And comments volumes with her ivory pen,
 Taking instructions from thy flowing eyes ;
 Eyes, that, when Ebena steps to Heaven,
 In silence of thy solemn evening's walk,
 Make, in the mantle of the richest night,
 The moon, the planets, and the meteors, light ;
 There angels in their crystal armours fight
 A doubtful battle with my tempted thoughts
 For Egypt's freedom, and the Soldan's life ;
 His life that so consumes Zenocrate,
 Whore sorrows lay more siege unto my soul,
 Than all my army to Damascus' walls :
 And neither Persia's sovereign, nor the Turk
 Troubled my senses with conceit of foil
 So much by much as doth Zenocrate.

What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then ?
 If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
 And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
 Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes ;
 If all the heavenly quintessence they still
 From their immortal flowers of poesy,
 Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
 The highest reaches of a human wit ;
 If these had made one poem's period,
 And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads
 One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
 Which into words no virtue can digest.
 But how unseemly is it for my sex,
 My discipline of arms and chivalry,
 My nature, and the terror of my name,
 To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint !
 Save only that in beauty's just applause,
 With whose instinct the soul of man is touched ;
 And every warrior that is wrapt with love
 Of fame, of valour, and of victory,
 Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits :
 I thus conceiving and subduing both
 That which hath stooped the chiefest of the gods,
 Even from the fiery-spangled veil of Heaven,
 To feel the lowly warmth of shepherds' flames,
 And mask in cottages of strowèd reeds,
 Shall give the world to note for all my birth,
 That virtue solely is the sum of glory,
 And fashions men with true nobility.—

This is how *Tamburlaine* reproaches one of his sons for
 preferring to stay with his mother rather than go to the wars :—

“ Bastardly boy, sprung from some coward's loins,
 And not the issue of great *Tamburlaine* :
 Of all the provinces I have subdu'd
 Thou shalt not have a foot, unless thou bear
 A mind courageous and invincible ;
 For he shall wear the crown of Persia
 Whose head hath deepest scars, whose breast most wounds,
 Which, being wroth, sends lightning from his eyes,
 And in the furrows of his frowning brows
 Harbours revenge, war, death, and cruelty ;
 For in a field whose superficies
 Is cover'd with a liquid purple veil,
 And sprinkled with the brains of slaughtered men,
 My royal chair of state shall be advanced ;
 And he that means to place himself therein,
 Must armèd wade up to the chin in blood.”

The last scene of Act II, Part Second, is so characteristic that it will be given entire, in order that the full flavour of Marlowe's style may be tasted :—

SCENE IV.

ZENOCRATE is discovered lying in her bed of state, with TAMBURLAINE sitting by her. About her bed are three PHYSICIANS tempering potions. Around are THERIDAMAS, TECHELLES, USUMCASANE, and her three Sons.

Tamb. Black is the beauty of the brightest day ;
 The golden ball of Heaven's eternal fire,
 That danced with glory on the silver waves,
 Now wants the fuel that inflamed his beams ;
 And all with faintness, and for foul disgrace,
 He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,
 Ready to darken earth with endless night.
 Zenocrate, that gave him light and life,
 Whose eyes shot fire from their ivory brows
 And tempered every soul with lively heat,
 Now by the malice of the angry skies,
 Whose jealousy admits no second mate,
 Draws in the comfort of her latest breath,
 All dazzled with the hellish mists of death.
 Now walk the angels on the walls of Heaven,
 As sentinels to warn the immortals souls
 To entertain divine Zenocrate.
 Apollo, Cynthia, and the ceaseless lamps
 That gently looked upon this loathsome earth,
 Shine downward now no more, but deck the Heavens,
 To entertain divine Zenocrate.
 The crystal springs, whose taste illuminates
 Refined eyes with an eternal sight,
 Like trièd silver, run through Paradise,
 To entertain divine Zenocrate.
 The cherubins and holy seraphins,
 That sing and play before the King of kings,
 Use all their voices and their instruments
 To entertain divine Zenocrate.
 And in this sweet and curious harmony,
 The God that tunes this music to our souls,
 Holds out his hand in highest majesty
 To entertain divine Zenocrate.
 Then let some holy trance convey my thoughts
 Up to the palace of th' empyreal Heaven,
 That this my life may be as short to me
 As are the days of sweet Zenocrate.—
 Physicians, will no physic do her good ?

Phys. My lord, your majesty shall soon perceive :
 And if she pass this fit, the worst is past.

Tamb. Tell me, how fares my fair Zenocrate ?

Zeno. I fare, my lord, as other empresses,
That, when this frail and transitory flesh
Hath sucked the measure of that vital air
That feeds the body with his dated health,
Wade with enforced and necessary change.

Tamb. May never such a change transform my love,
In whose sweet being I repose my life,
Whose heavenly presence, beautified with health,
Gives light to Phœbus and the fixèd stars !
Whose absence makes the sun and moon as dark
As when, opposed in one diameter,
Their spheres are mounted on the serpent's head,
Or else descended to his winding train.
Live still, my love, and so conserve my life,
Or, dying, be the author of my death !

Zeno. Live still, my lord ! O, let my sovereign live
And sooner let the fiery element
Dissolve and make your kingdom in the sky,
Than this base earth should shroud your majesty :
For should I but suspect your death by mine,
The comfort of my future happiness,
And hope to meet your highness in the Heavens,
Turned to despair, would break my wretched breast
And fury would confound my present rest.
But let me die, my love ; yet let me die ;
With love and patience let your true love die !
Your grief and fury hurts my second life.—
Yet let me kiss my lord before I die,
And let me die with kissing of my lord.
But since my life is lengthenèd yet a while,
Let me take leave of these my loving sons,
And of my lords, whose true nobility
Have merited my latest memory.
Sweet sons, farewell ! In death resemble me,
And in your lives your father's excellence.
Some music, and my fit will cease, my lord.

[*They call for music.*]

Tamb. Proud fury, and intolerable fit,
That dares torment the body of my love,
And scourge the scourge of the immortal God :
Now are those spheres, where Cupid used to sit,
Wounding the world with wonder and with love,
Sadly supplied with pale and ghastly death,
Whose darts do pierce the centre of my soul.
Her sacred beauty hath enchanted Heaven ;
And had she lived before the siege of Troy,
Helen (whose beauty summoned Greece to arms,
And drew a thousand ships to Tenedos)
Had not been named in Homer's Iliad ;
Her name had been in every line he wrote.
Or had those wanton poets, for whose birth

Old Rome was proud, but gazed a while on her,
Nor Lesbia nor Corinna had been named ;
Zenocrate had been the argument
Of every epigram or elegy.

[*The music sounds.*—ZENOCRATE *dies.*

What ! is she dead ? Techelles, draw thy sword
And wound the earth, that it may cleave in twain,
And we descend into the infernal vaults,
To hale the Fatal Sisters by the hair,
And throw them in the triple moat of hell,
For taking hence my fair Zenocrate.
Casane and Theridamas, to arms !
Raise cavaleros higher than the clouds,
And with the cannon break the frame of Heaven ;
Batter the shining palace of the sun,
And shiver all the starry firmament,
For amorous Jove hath snatched my love from hence,
Meaning to make her stately queen of Heaven.
What God soever holds thee in His arms,
Giving thee nectar and ambrosia,
Behold me here, divine Zenocrate,
Raving, impatient, desperate, and mad,
Breaking my steelèd lance, with which I burst
The rusty beams of Janus' temple-doors,
Letting out Death and tyrannising War,
To march with me under this bloody flag !
And if thou pitiest Tamburlaine the Great,
Come down from Heaven, and live with me again !

Ther. Ah, good my lord, be patient ; she is dead,
And all this raging cannot make her live.
If words might serve, our voice hath rent the air ;
If tears, our eyes have watered all the earth ;
If grief, our murdered hearts have strained forth blood ;
Nothing prevails, for she is dead, my lord.

Tamb. " For she is dead ! " Thy words do pierce my soul !
Ah, sweet Theridamas ! say so no more ;
Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
And feed my mind that dies for want of her,
Where'er her soul be, thou [*To the body*] shalt stay with me,
Embalmed with cassia, ambergris, and myrrh,
Not lapt in lead, but in a sheet of gold,
And till I die thou shalt not be interred.
Then in as rich a tomb as Mausolus'
We both will rest and have one epitaph
Writ in as many several languages
As I have conquered kingdoms with my sword.
This cursèd town will I consume with fire,
Because this place bereaved me of my love ;
The houses, burnt, will look as if they mourned ;
And here will I set up her statua,

And march about it with my mourning camp
Drooping and pining for Zenocrate.

[*The scene closes.*]

As a good specimen of Marlowe's powerful but over-charged verse, and also of his stage business, take his speech to his timorous son :—

Tamb. Villain ! Art thou the son of Tamburlaine,
And fears't to die, or with a curtle-axe
To hew thy flesh, and make a gaping wound ?
Hast thou beheld a peal of ordnance strike
A ring of pikes, mingled with shot and horse,
Whose shattered limbs, being tossed as high as Heaven,
Hang in the air as thick as sunny motes,
And canst thou, coward, stand in fear of death ?
Hast thou not seen my horsemen charge the foe,
Shot through the arms, cut overthwart the hands,
Dyeing their lances with their streaming blood,
And yet at night carouse within my tent,
Filling their empty veins with airy wine,
That, being concocted, turns to crimson blood,
And wilt thou shun the field for fear of wounds ?
View me, thy father, that hath conquered kings,
And, with his horse, marched round about the earth,
Quite void of scars, and clear from any wound,
That by the wars lost not a drop of blood,
And see him lance his flesh to teach you all.

[*He cuts his arm.*]

A wound is nothing, be it ne'er so deep ;
Blood is the god of war's rich livery.
Now look I like a soldier, and this wound
As great a grace and majesty to me,
As if a chain of gold, enamelled,
Enchased with diamonds, sapphires, rubies,
And fairest pearl of wealthy India,
Were mounted here under a canopy,
And I sate down clothed with a massy robe,
That late adorned the Afric potentate,
Whom I brought bound unto Damascus' walls.
Come, boys, and with your fingers search my wound,
And in my blood wash all your hands at once,
While I sit smiling to behold the sight.
Now, my boys, what think ye of a wound ?

But the very height of audacity is reached in Scene III, Act IV, where Tamburlaine enters in his chariot which is actually drawn by the Kings he has taken captive in war ! He holds the reins in his left hand, and scourges the Kings with his right :—

“ Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia !

What ! can ye draw but twenty miles a-day,

And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
 And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine,
 But from Asphaltis, where I conquered you,
 To Byron here, where thus I honour you ?
 The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven,
 And blow the morning from their nosterils,
 Making their fiery gait above the clouds,
 Are not so honour'd in their Governor
 As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.
 The headstrong jades of Thrace Alcides tam'd,
 That King Egeus fed with human flesh,
 And made so wanton that they knew their strengths,
 Were not subdu'd with valour more divine
 Than you by this unconquer'd arm of mine.
 To make you fierce, and fit my appetite,
 You shall be fed with flesh as raw as blood,
 And drink in pails the strongest muscadell ;
 If you can live with it, then live, and draw
 My chariot swifter than the racking clouds ;
 If not, then die like beasts, and fit for naught
 But perches for the black and fatal ravens."

Here our extracts from this play must cease. It has already been stated that Marlowe became an actor, but he did not tread the boards long, for, having broken his leg in one of the performances, he became so incurably lame as to put acting out of the question. Henceforth he was to confine himself to writing. To a man of Marlowe's presumably fiery, impatient character, exclusion from active pursuits must have been inexpressibly galling ; but, fortunately for English literature, his lameness did not affect the powers of his mind, nor the poetic ardour of his soul, for in 1588 he produced *Dr. Faustus*, regarded by some critics as his masterpiece. The play is founded upon a popular prose *History of Dr. Faustus*, an English edition of the old Faust legend ; but although Marlowe follows the prose account very closely he has instilled so much poetry and passion into it—rising sometimes to heights of terrific grandeur—that the tragedy is as much his own as if he had invented the fable.

As *Tamburlaine* depicts the lust for ruling power, *Faustus* personifies the lust for knowledge and pleasure. It is deeply interesting to compare this play with Göthe's *Faust*—the Englishman's thrilling throughout with unrestrained passionate emotion—the German's saturated with modern philosophical thought. The very fiend in Marlowe's hands is tragically melancholy, whilst in Göthe's he is always mocking and sceptical—*der Geist der stets verneint*. Göthe himself admired Marlowe's *Faustus*, saying of it, "How grandly it is all planned!" Certainly the great German's work—superior as it is in other respects—has nothing comparable to that fearful display of mental agony to be found in the last scene of Marlowe's tragedy. This is very high praise if we remember that Göthe's *Faust* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* are the two greatest poems since *Paradise Lost*.

Faustus is a difficult book to quote from : it should be read in its entirety to experience the full spell of the poet's power. Nevertheless, a few extracts must be given if only to show Marlowe's advance in dramatic art. After *Faustus* has made the compact with Mephistophilis there is a significant scene between the Good and Bad Angels and *Faustus*.

Enter Good Angel and Evil Angel.

G. Ang. *Faustus*, repent ; yet God will pity thee.

E. Ang. Thou art a spirit ; God can not pity thee.

Faust. Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit ?

Be I a devil, yet God may pity me ;

Ay, God will pity me if I repent.

E. Ang. Ay, but *Faustus* never shall repent.

[*Exeunt Angels.*]

Faust. My heart's so hardened I cannot repent.

Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,

But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears

"*Faustus*, thou art damned !" Then swords and knives,

Poison, gun, halters, and envenomed steel

Are laid before me to despatch myself,

And long ere this I should have slain myself,

Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me

Of Alexander's love and CEnon's death ?

And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes

With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,

Made music with my Mephistophilis ?

Why should I die then, or basely despair ?

I am resolved : *Faustus* shall ne'er repent—

Come, Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,

And argue of divine astrology.

One of the best-known and most beautiful passages is the splendid apostrophe to Helen of Troy, which could only have been written by a great poet, and which Shakespeare himself has not surpassed. The fiend having conjured up Helen, *Faustus* thus addresses her :

Faust. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium ?

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. [*Kisses her.*]

Her lips suck forth my soul ; see where it flies !—

Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in these lips,

And all is dross that is not Helena.

I will be Paris and for love of thee,

Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sacked :

And I will combat with weak Menelaus,

And wear thy colours on my plumèd crest :

Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,

And then return to Helen for a kiss.
 Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars ;
 Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
 When he appeared to hapless Semele :
 More lovely than the monarch of the sky
 In wanton Arethusa's azured arms :
 And none but thou shalt be my paramour.

[*Exeunt.*

We now pass to that final scene of anguish and despair which is unexcelled in any known literature.

Faust. Ah, Faustus,
 Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
 And then thou must be damned perpetually !
 Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of Heaven,
 That time may cease, and midnight never come ;
 Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again and make
 Perpetual day ; or let this hour be but
 A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
 That Faustus may repent and save his soul !
O lente, lente, currite noctis equi !
 The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
 The Devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.
 O, I'll leap up to my God ! Who pulls me down ?
 See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament !
 One drop would save my soul—half a drop : ah, my Christ !
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ !
 Yet will I call on him : O spare me, Lucifer !—
 Where is it now ? 'tis gone ; and see where God
 Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows !
 Mountain and hills come, come and fall on me,
 And hide me from the heavy wrath of God !
 No ! no !
 Then will I headlong run into the earth ;
 Earth gape ! O no, it will not harbour me !
 You stars that reigned at my nativity,
 Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
 Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist
 Into the entrails of yon labouring clouds,
 That when they vomit forth into the air,
 My limbs may issue from their smoky mouths,
 So that my soul may but ascend to Heaven.

[*The clock strikes the half hour.*

Ah, half the hour is past ! 'twill all be past anon !
 O God !
 If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
 Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransomed me,
 Impose some end to my incessant pain ;
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years
 A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved !

O, no end is limited to damnèd souls !
 Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul ?
 Or why is this immortal that thou hast ?
 Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis ! were that true,
 This soul should fly from from me, and I be changed
 Unto some brutish beast ! all beasts are happy,
 For, when they die,
 Their souls are soon dissolved in elements ;
 But mine must live, still to be plagued in hell.
 Curst be the parents that engendered me !
 No, Faustus : curse thyself : curse Lucifer
 That hath deprived thee of the joys of Meaven.

[*The clock strikes twelve.*

O, it strikes, it strikes ! Now, body, turn to air,
 Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.

[*Thunder and lightning.*

O soul, be changed into little water-drops,
 And fall into the ocean—ne'er be found. [*Enter Devils.*
 My God ! My God ! look not so fierce on me !
 Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile !
 Ugly hell, gape not ! come not, Lucifer !
 I'll burn my books !—Ah Mephistophilis !

[*Exeunt Devils with FAUSTUS.*

The whole play is equal to the most powerful sermon ever written, and how admirably the final chorus sums up the moral :

“ Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
 And burnèd is Apollo's laurel-bough,
 That sometime grew within this learned man.
 Faustus is gone : regard his hellish fall,
 Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,
 Only to wonder at unlawful things,
 Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
 To practise more than heavenly power permits.”

We must now pass somewhat more rapidly over the succeeding plays. It may here be pointed out that Marlowe's tragedies do not deal with the whole of human life. His usual method was to personify some strong passion and make everything else subservient to it. The natural result was *one-character* plays. Thus *Tamburlaine* is personified ambition. Faustus personified craving for learning and pleasure, whilst in the next play, *The Jew of Malta*, we have a personification of lust for wealth. The principal character, Barabas the Jew, was performed by the famous actor Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College, who, to make the part as hideous as possible, wore a large false nose—such a nose as would do no discredit to a modern pantomime. In all our early plays Jews were furnished with a ridiculous excess of the nasal organ, for it was considered a Christian virtue to make these people appear as ugly as possible. The *Jew of Malta* was produced about 1589 and

became immensely popular. Its main interest of course centres in Barabas, whose character is drawn with extraordinary power, indeed, but with an over-charged pen—one feels that truth to nature is too palpably violated, for Barabas is a *fiend*. The play was doubtless familiar to Shakespeare, who most probably founded Shylock on Barabas, but who, as usual, vastly improved upon his model, for Shylock, though a strongly-marked character, is always a *human being*. There are plenty of magnificent lines and telling phrases in the *Jew of Malta*, but the noble monologue with which Barabas opens the play is the highest piece of workmanship in it.

BARABAS *discovered in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him.*

Bar. So that of thus much that return was made ;
 And of the third part of the Persian ships,
 There was the venture summed and satisfied.
 As for those Sabans, and the men of Uz,
 That bought my Spanish oils and wines of Greece,
 Here have I purs't their paltry silverlings.
 Fie ; what a trouble 'tis to count this trash ;
 Well fare the Arabians, who so richly pay
 The things they traffic for with wedge of gold,
 Whereof a man may easily in a day
 Tell that which may maintain him all his life.
 The needy groom that never fingered groat,
 Would make a miracle of thus much coin :
 But he whose steel-barred coffers are crammed full,
 And all his lifetime hath been tired,
 Wearying his fingers' ends with telling it,
 Would in his age be loth to labour so,
 And for a pound to sweat himself to death.
 Give me the merchants of the Indian mines,
 That trade in metal of the purest mould ;
 The wealthy Moor, that in the eastern rocks
 Without control can pick his riches up,
 And in his house heap pearls like pebble-stones,
 Receive them free, and sell them by the weight ;
 Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,
 And seld-seen costly stones of so great price,
 As one of them indifferently rated,
 And of a carat of this quantity,
 May serve in peril of calamity
 To ransom great kings from captivity.
 This is the ware wherein consists my wealth ;
 And thus methinks should men of judgment frame
 Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
 And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
 Infinite riches in a little room.
 But now how stands the wind ?

Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill ?
 Ha ! to the east ? yes : see, how stand the vanes ?
 East and by south : why then I hope my ships
 I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles
 Are gotten up by Nilus' winding banks :
 Mine argosy from Alexandria,
 Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,
 Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore
 To Malta, through our Mediterranean sea.

Marlowe's next tragedy, the *Massacre at Paris*, is his crudest, but it ought to be remembered that the text has come down to us both mutilated and hopelessly corrupt. There are fine passages, but one looks in vain for those gems of poetry so prodigally scattered in the preceding plays. Perhaps this scene, where Guise meets his death, reminds us most forcibly of Marlowe's best style :

Guise. "Now sues the King for favour to the Guise,
 And all his minions stoop when I command :
 Why, this 'tis to have an army in the field.
 Now, by the holy sacrament, I swear,
 As ancient Romans o'er their captive lords,
 So will I triumph o'er this wanton king ;
 And he shall follow my proud chariot's wheels.
 Now do I but begin to look about,
 And all my former time was spent in vain.
 Hold, sword,
 For in thee is the Duke of Guise's hope."

Re-enter Third Murderer.

"Villain, why dost thou look so ghastly ? speak."

Third Murd. "O, pardon me, my Lord of Guise !"

Guise. "Pardon thee ! why, what hast thou done ?"

Third Murd. "O my lord ! I am one of them that is set to murder you !"

Guise. "To murder me, villain ?"

Third Murd. "Ay, my lord : the rest have ta'en their standings in the next room ; therefore, good my lord, go not forth."

Guise. "Yet Cæsar shall go forth."

Let mean conceits and baser men fear death ;
 Tut, they are peasants ; I am Duke of Guise ;
 And princes with their looks engender fear."

First Murd. [*within.*] "Stand close ; he is coming ; I know him by his voice."

Guise. "As pale as ashes ! nay, then, it is time to look about."

Enter First and Second Murderers.

First and Sec. Murd. "Down with him, down with him" !

[*They stab GUISE.*

Guise. "O, I have my death's wound ! give me leave to speak."

Sec. Murd. "Then pray to God, and ask forgiveness of the King."

Guise. "Trouble me not ; I ne'er offended him,
 Nor will I ask forgiveness of the King.
 O, that I have not power to stay my life,
 Nor immortality to be reveng'd !
 To die by peasants, what a grief is this !
 Ah, Sixtus, be reveng'd upon the King !
 Philip and Parma, I am slain for you !
 Pope, excommunicate, Philip depose
 The wicked branch of curs'd Valois his line !
Vive la messe ! perish Huguenots !
 Thus Cæsar did go forth, and thus he died."

[*Dies.*

The next work which claims our attention is *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, left unfinished by Marlowe, and completed by Nashe, who was greater as a prose satirist than as a dramatic poet. The play is of course derived from the *Æneid*, but it cannot be said that Marlowe's queen compares at all favourably with the Roman poet's. At the same time there are original passages in this love-tragedy resplendent with glowing beauty and well worthy of Marlowe's reputation. Take, for example, Jupiter's speech to Ganymede :—

"What is't, sweet wag, I should deny thy youth ?
 Whose face reflects such pleasure to mine eyes,
 As I, exhal'd with thy fire-darting beams,
 Have oft driven back the horses of the night,
 Whenas they would have hal'd thee from my sight.
 Sit on my knee, and call for thy content,
 Control proud Fate, and cut the thread of Time ;
 Why, are not all the gods at thy command,
 And heaven and earth the bounds of thy delight ;
 Vulcan shall dance to make thee laughing sport,
 And my nine daughters sing when thou art sad ;
 From Juno's bird I'll pluck her spotted pride,
 To make thee fans wherewith to cool thy face ;
 And Venus' swans shall shed their silver down,
 To sweeten out the slumbers of thy bed ;
 Hermes no more shall shew the world his wings,
 If that thy fancy in his feathers dwell,
 But, as this one, I'll tear them all from him,

(*Plucks a feather from Hermes' wings*)

Do thou but say, "their colour pleaseth me."
 Hold here, my little love ; these linkèd gems,

(*Gives jewels*)

My Juno ware upon her marriage-day,
 Put thou about thy neck, my own sweet heart,
 And trick thy arms and shoulders with my theft."

It is not easy to say which part of this play was written by Marlowe and which by Nashe ; but the passage just cited is clearly

in the former's manner, as is the following excerpt from Æneas's description of the fall of Troy :—

“ O, the enchanting words of that base slave,
 Made him to think Epeus' pine-tree horse
 A sacrifice t' appease Minerva's wrath ;
 The rather, for that one Laocoon,
 Breaking a spear upon his hollow breast,
 Was with two wingèd serpents stung to death.
 Whereat aghast, we were commanded straight
 With reverence to draw it into Troy ;
 In which unhappy work was I employ'd ;
 These hands did help to hale it to the gates,
 Through which it could not enter, 'twas so huge—
 O, had it never entered, Troy had stood !
 But Priamus, impatient of delay,
 Enforc'd a wide breach in that rampir'd wall
 Which thousand battering-rams could never pierce,
 And so came in this fatal instrument ;
 At whose accursèd feet, as overjoy'd,
 We banqueted, till, overcome with wine,
 Some surfeited, and others soundly slept,
 Which Sinon viewing, caus'd the Greekish spies
 To haste to Tenedos, and tell the camp ;
 Then he unlock'd the horse, and suddenly,
 From out his entrails, Neoptolemus,
 Setting his spear upon the ground, leapt forth,
 And, after him, a thousand Grecians more,
 In whose stern faces shin'd the quenchless fire
 That after burnt the pride of Asia.”

There is the unmistakable Marlowe ring in those last lines.

All the plays hitherto considered, rich though they are in individual parts, are deficient in that beauty of proportion, and that noble moderation for which we look in high-wrought works of art ; but the tragedy of Edward II—the last on our list—possesses both these qualities, and puts Marlowe for once on a par with his mighty successor Shakespeare, whose Richard II must yield the palm to Marlowe's tragedy. Charles Lamb, one of the most delicate and most luminous of dramatic critics, remarks of Edward II : “ The death scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted.” And Mr. Swinburne, himself a poet, and one of the greatest of living literary critics, asserts that there is more discrimination of character in Marlowe's play than in Shakespeare's, and that the figures are more life-like. At the same time there are none of those magnificent outbursts of rapture which we find in the other plays ; the poet seems to have curbed his fervid, passionate nature, and to have worked on a different model. Only one extract can be here given from this fine play, viz., the scene of the king's death.

K. Edw. Who's there? what light is that? wherefore com'st thou?

Light. To comfort you, and bring you joyful news.

K. Edw. Small comfort finds poor Edward in thy looks. Villain, I know thou com'st to murder me.

Light. To murder you, my most gracious lord! Far is it from my heart to do you harm. The queen sent me to see how you were used, For she relents at this your misery: And what eyes can refrain from shedding tears, To see a king in this most piteous state?

K. Edw. Weep'st thou already? list awhile to me. And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is, Or as Matrevis', hewn from the Caucasus, Yet will it melt, ere I have done my tale. This dungeon where they keep me is the sink Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.

Light. O villains!

K. Edw. And there in mire and puddle have I stood This ten days' space; and, lest that I should sleep, One plays continually upon a drum. They give me bread and water, being a king; So that, for want of sleep and sustenance, My mind's distempered, and my body's numbed, And whether I have limbs or no I know not. O, would my blood drooped out from every vein, As doth this water from my tattered robes. Tell Isabel, the queen, I looked not thus, When for her sake I ran at tilt in France, And there unhorsed the Duke of Cleremont.

Light. O speak no more, my lord! this breaks my heart. Lie on this bed, and rest yourself awhile.

K. Edw. These looks of thine can harbour nought but death: I see my tragedy written in thy brows. Yet stay; awhile forbear thy bloody hand, And let me see the stroke before it comes, That even then when I shall lose my life, My mind may be more steadfast on my God.

Light. What means your highness to mistrust me thus?

K. Edw. What mean'st thou to dissemble with me thus?

Light. These hands were never stained with innocent blood, Nor shall they now be tainted with a king's.

K. Edw. Forgive my thought for having such a thought. One jewel have I left; receive thou this. [*Giving jewel.* Still fear I, and I know not what's the cause, But every joint shakes as I give it thee. O, if thou harbourest murder in thy heart, Let this gift change thy mind, and save thy soul. Know that I am a King: O, at that name I feel a hell of grief! where is my crown? Gone, gone! and do I still remain alive?

Light. You're overwatched, my lord ; lie down and rest.

K. Edw. But that grief keeps me waking, I should sleep ;
For not these ten days have these eye-lids closed.
Now as I speak they fall, and yet with fear
Open again. O wherefore sitt'st thou here ?

Light. If you mistrust me, I'll begone, my lord.

K. Edw. No, no, for if thou mean'st to murder me,
Thou wilt return again, and therefore stay. [*Sleeps.*]

Light. He sleeps.

K. Edw. [*waking*]. O let me not die yet ! O stay a while !

Light. How now, my lord ?

K. Edw. Something still buzzeth in mine ears,
And tells me if I sleep I never wake ;
This fear is that which makes me tremble thus.
And therefore tell me, wherefore art thou come ?

Light. To rid thee of thy life—Matrevis, come !

Enter MATREVIS and GURNEY.

K. Edw. I am too weak and feeble to resist :—
Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul !

Light. Run for the table.

K. Edw. O spare me, or despatch me in a trice.

[*MATREVIS brings in a table. King Edward is murdered by holding him down on the bed with the table and stamping upon it.*]

We now pass from the plays to the poems, which, omitting the translations, are indeed but fragments, but fragments inexpressibly dear to all lovers of poetry. The principal poem is *Hero and Leander*, completed by Chapman after Marlowe's death. It is divided into "Sestiads" of which the first two only are by Marlowe, and is written in rhymed heroics of such clear rich music as was not again to be heard in English literature until the early part of the present century—until the notes of John Keats were heard. Mr. Swinburne finely says that "*Hero and Leander* stands out alone amid all the wild and poetic wealth of its teeming and turbulent age, as might a small shrine of Parian sculpture amid the rank splendour of a tropic jungle." The poem was at once successful, and widely quoted. An entire line is cited by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, and Marlowe is pityingly referred to as the "Dead Shepherd :"

"Dead Shepherd ! now I find thy saw of might,
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ?"

Passages are introduced into one of Ben Jonson's plays, whilst Taylor the water-poet used to sing couplets from it as he rowed on the Thames. The poem being written with greater freedom than modern ears tolerate, is not available for recitation as a whole, but the part from which Shakespeare quoted will now be given as it affords a fair sample of Marlowe's versification :—

" It lies not in our power to love or hate,
 For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.
 When two are stript long ere the course begin,
 We wish that one should lose, the other win ;
 And one especially do we affect
 Of two gold ingots, like in each respect :
 The reason no man knows ; let it suffice,
 What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.
 Where both deliberate, the love is slight :
 Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight ? "

If the music of *Hero and Leander* was not reproduced until Keats began to sing, the lovely melody of the *Fragment* which follows, was not caught again until Shelley's sweet voice was heard :—

FRAGMENT.

I walk'd along a stream, for pureness rare,
 Brighter than sunshine ; for it did acquaint
 The dullest sight with all the glorious prey
 That in the pebble-pavèd channel lay.

No molten crystal, but a richer mine,
 Even Nature's rarest alchymy ran there—
 Diamonds resolv'd, and substance more divine,
 Through whose bright-gliding current might appear
 A thousand naked nymphs, whose ivory shine,
 Enamelling the banks, made them more dear
 Than ever was that glorious palace gate
 Where the day-shining Sun in triumph sate.

Upon this brim the eglantine and rose,
 The tamarisk, olive, and the almond tree,
 As kind companions, in one union grows,
 Folding their twining arms, as oft we see
 Turtle-taught lovers either other close,
 Lending to dulness feeling sympathy ;
 And as a costly valance o'er a bed,
 So did their garland-tops the brook o'erspread.

Their leaves, that differ'd both in shape and show,
 Though all were green, yet difference such in green,
 Like to the checker'd bent of Iris' bow,
 Prided the running main, as it had been.

That charming song "Come live with me," was first printed in the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, and was attributed to Shakespcare. Sir Hugh Evans sings snatches of it in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Walton's *Complete Angler* contains the "smooth song made by Kit Marlowe," as also Sir Walter Raleigh's reply. The sweetness and simplicity of this song have rendered it a favourite for three centuries, and it seems that its freshness will never fade. Although so well-known it cannot well be omitted from any account of Marlowe's works.

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE.

Come live with me, and be my love ;
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies ;
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle ;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull ;
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold ;

A belt of straw and ivy-buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs :
An if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherd-swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning :
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me, and be my love.

ANSWER BY SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee, and be thy love.

But time drives flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
Then Philomel becometh dumb,
And age complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To ways and winter reckoning yields ;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten ;
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy-buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move,
To come to thee and be thy love.

What should we talk of dainties, then,
Of better meat than's fit for men ?
These are but vain : that's only good
Which God hath bless'd and sent for food.

But could youth last, and love still breed,
Had joys no date, nor age no need ;
Then those delights my mind might move,
To live with thee and be thy love.

We now come to the closing scene in our poet's life which was as tragic as any incident of his plays. Perhaps nothing has more injured Marlowe's character than the manner of his death. His adversaries have exultingly pointed to it as a confirmation of their calumnies, and as a punishment inflicted by divine Providence. Yet much has been written of this sad ending without sufficient proof. It is not even certain whether he was killed intentionally or accidentally. The only positive scrap of information which we possess is this terribly concise entry in the burial register of the Parish Church at Deptford : " Christopher Marlowe slain by ffrancis Archer, the 1st of June, 1593." Thus at the early age of 30 ended the career of a mighty genius—of a poet who had sounded the depths of human passion as no Englishman had done before. This is another proof of the truth of the old

saying, "those whom the Gods love die young." When we think of Marlowe's brief life we are reminded of Chatterton, of Shelley, of Byron, and of Keats, who all passed away before their genius had fully ripened, but who, nevertheless, left priceless and imperishable legacies to posterity. It is always interesting to know in what consideration a great writer was held by his contemporaries because, although the verdict of posterity is the final verdict, and as a rule the just one, yet it is instructive to compare the judgment of the present with that of the past. In this respect Marlowe has nothing to lose. Peele, in a work published shortly after Marlowe's death, thus apostrophises him :—

..... " Unhappy in thine end,
Marley, the Muses' darling for thy verse
Fit to write passions for the souls below,
If any wretched souls in passion speak."

Alluding to the familiar abbreviation by which the poet was known, Heywood says—

" Marlo, renown'd for his rare art and wit,
Could ne'er attain beyond the name of Kit."

Another writer speaks of him as " Kynde Kit Marlowe." But one of the finest tributes to the dead poet occurs in an Epistle by Michael Drayton :—

" Next Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had ; his raptures were
All air and fire which made his verses clear ;
For that fine madness still he did retain,
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."

In estimating Marlowe's work it ought to be borne in mind that it was all finished by the age of 30—the age at which Shakespeare had only well-begun *his* wonderful career. In those six years of his London life—1587 to 1593—Marlowe had given the world all the products of his genius upon which his claims to lasting fame were ultimately to rest, and many speculations have been hazarded as to what he might have done had he lived as long as his glorious pupil Shakespeare. On this subject everyone must form his own opinion by diligently studying the works of the two poets, but the writer of this sketch, at any rate, is unable to agree with those who think that Marlowe, had he lived longer, might have equalled the vast range of Shakespeare. Several weighty reasons might be given for this conviction, but *one* must here suffice, viz., the fact of Marlowe's utter and striking lack of humour. His deficiency in this respect is truly remarkable. There is not in all his known work the faintest sparkle of true humour—not the smallest indication that he could ever have created a Falstaff, a Rosalind, or indeed any of the lighter creations of the incomparable master. No ; the cast of Marlowe's genius, as

exhibited in his dramas, was almost exclusively tragic ; he struck the chords of passion with a powerful hand and brought forth some tones which have been rarely equalled and never surpassed, but he had not the lighter touch required for the expression of sportive fancies and humours.

To sum up this necessarily brief and imperfect sketch, Marlowe's claims to undying fame are mainly two :

First, as the originator of that magnificent and prodigal display of poetic genius known as the Elizabethan drama, he may be said to have settled for ever the question whether we were to have a thoroughly national drama, beating in unison with the heart of the nation, or whether, like France, we were to have cold, lifeless imitations of the masterpieces of Greece and Rome. By the force of his genius he shaped the future course of the English drama, and prepared the way for his great successor. If Shakespeare is the dazzling sun of this mighty period, Marlowe is certainly the morning star.

Secondly, he triumphantly proved that ten-syllabled unrhymed verse is the supreme vehicle—in English—for dramatic expression. In the hands of his successors blank verse received many beautiful modulations, but it was the Kentish poet who first established its pre-eminence for dramatic purposes. Even such a great versifier as Dryden failed in his attempt to substitute rhymed couplets for blank verse.

These are the unimpeachable qualifications which constitute Marlowe's peculiar greatness, these have kept his fame undimmed for three centuries, and justify the memorial which has been so tardily erected in the fine old city of his birth.

We conclude our sketch by giving the words written in 1598, by a poet who knew Marlowe, and who was a warm admirer of his genius—Henry Petowe :—

“ What mortal Soule with Marlo might contend,
 That could 'gainst reason force him stoope or bend ;
 Whose silver-charming tounge mou'd such delight,
 That men would shun their sleepe in still darke night
 To meditate upon his goulden lynes,
 His rare conceyts, and sweet-according rimes.
 But Marlo, still-admirèd Marlo's gon
 To liue with beautie in Elyzium ;
 Immortal beautie, who desires to heare
 His sacred poesies, sweet in every eare :
 Marlo must frame to Orpheus' melodie
 Himnes all divine to make heaven harmonie.
 There ever liue the prince of poetrie,
 Liue with the liuing in eternitie ! ”



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